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Government funding to run out unless Speaker Mike Johnson finds support for bill

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rushing to prevent a Christmas-time government shutdown, House Speaker Mike Johnson scrambled Wednesday to salvage a stopgap measure to keep federal offices running despite an onslaught of opposition from hard-right conservatives led by President-elect Donald Trump ally Elon Musk.

Rank-and-file lawmakers decried the massive 1,500-page bill over its increased spending — which includes their first pay-raises in more than a decade — a shock after one of the most unproductive chaotic session in modern times. A number of Republicans were waiting for Trump to signal whether they should vote yes or no. "This should not pass," Musk posted on his social media site X in the wee hours of Wednesday morning.

The outcome comes as no surprise for Johnson, who like other Republican House speakers before him, has been unable to convince his majority to go along with the routine needs of federal government operations, which they would prefer to slash. Even the addition of much-needed disaster aid, some \$100.4 billion in the aftermath of hurricanes Helene and Milton and other natural calamities that ravaged states this year, plus \$10 bil-



Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, R-La., talks during a U.S. Capitol Hanukkah event with a ceremonial Menorah lighting to commemorate the upcoming eight-day festival of Hanukkah on Capitol Hill Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

lion in economic assistance for farmers failed to win over the budget-slashing GOP. It all shows just how hard it will be for Republicans next year, as they seize control of the House, Senate and White House, to unify and lead the nation. And it underscores how much Johnson and the GOP leaders must depend on Trump's blessing to see any legislative package over the finish line.

"What does President Trump want Republicans to do: vote for the CR or shut down government? Absent direction, confusion reigns," said retiring Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, in a sly post on X.

The president-elect had yet to weigh in on what the lawmakers should do.

But Musk, who is heading the his new Department of Government Efficiency was leading the charge against it, warned that "Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!"

It's not an idle threat coming from Musk, the world's richest man, who helped bankroll Trump's victory and can easily use his America PAC to make or break political careers.

Democratic Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland said this

is the problem with "an oligarchy a handful of wealthy people run everything and everyone is supposed to live in fear of them; and their wealth becomes an instrument of coercive power over everything."

Democrats, who negotiated the final product with Johnson and Senate GOP leadership, will be expected to provide enough support to help Johnson ensure passage, as is often the case on big bills. Federal government funding runs out at midnight Friday. "The sooner Congress acts, the better," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said as he opened the upper

chamber. "As always, bipartisan cooperation must lead the way — we can't have last minute delays or grandstanding."

The final package extends existing government programs and services at their current operating levels for a few more months, through March 14, 2025.

The stopgap measure is needed because Congress has failed to pass its annual appropriations bills to fund all the various agencies in the federal government, from the Pentagon and national security apparatus, to the health, welfare, transportation and other routine domestic services. When the fiscal year ended on Sept. 30, Congress simply punted the problem by passing a temporary funding bill that expires Friday. But the inches-thick bill goes beyond routine funding and tacks on several other measures that lawmakers are trying to push through to passage before the end of this congressional session, especially as some elected officials will not be returning in the new year.

Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., called it essentially a junk sandwich, using a swear word. The chairman of the Freedom Caucus, Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md., said a lot of lawmakers "are a little disappointed at how this last week has worked out."

And then there's the pay-raise. □



Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be Defense Secretary, walks to meet with senators, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for Secretary of

Defense is expected to face his first public questioning from U.S. senators

Senate committee to hold confirmation hearing for defense secretary nominee Hegseth on Jan 14

on Jan. 14.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Roger Wicker, R-Miss., told reporters Wednesday that the committee is planning to hold Pete Hegseth's hearing in mid-January as the former Fox News host and veteran has visited Senate offices in an effort to rally Republicans around him. Some senators have questioned his fitness for the role amid allegations

of excessive drinking and sexual misconduct.

Hegseth has told senators that he wouldn't drink while defense secretary and pushed back on the reports of misbehavior, and Trump has publicly boosted his nomination, posting on his social media platform last week that "Pete is a WINNER, and there is nothing that can be done to change that!!!" Hegseth also attended the Army-

Navy football game with the president-elect over the weekend.

More confirmation hearings are expected after the new Republican Senate is sworn in on Jan. 3 and Trump is inaugurated on Jan. 20. Incoming Senate Majority Leader John Thune has said he wants to confirm Trump's cabinet as quickly as possible once Trump is in office. □

Some elite U.S. universities favor wealthy students in admissions decisions, lawsuit alleges

By **BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS**
and **COLLIN BINKLEY**
AP Education Writers

Children of the wealthy and connected get special admissions consideration at some elite U.S. universities, according to new filings in a class-action lawsuit originally brought against 17 schools. Georgetown's then-president, for example, listed a prospective student on his "president's list" after meeting her and her wealthy father at an Idaho conference known as "summer camp for billionaires," according to Tuesday court filings in the price-fixing lawsuit filed in Chicago federal court in 2022. Although it's always been assumed that such favoritism exists, the filings offer a rare peek at the often secret deliberations of university heads and admissions officials. They show how schools admit otherwise unqualified wealthy children because their parents have connections and could possibly donate large sums down the line, raising questions about fairness. Stuart Schmill, the dean of admissions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote in a 2018 email that the university admitted four out of six applicants recommended by then-board chairman Robert Millard, including two who "we would really not have otherwise admitted." The two others were not admitted because they were "not in the ball park, or the push from him was not as strong." In the email, Schmill said Millard was careful to play down his influence on admissions decisions, but he said the chair also sent notes on all six students and later met with Schmill to share insight "into who he thought was more of a priority." The filings are the latest salvo in a lawsuit that claims that



People walk past the Ray and Maria Stata Center on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, Mass., on July 16, 2019.

Associated Press

cluding two who "we would really not have otherwise admitted." The two others were not admitted because they were "not in the ball park, or the push from him was not as strong." In the email, Schmill said Millard was careful to play down his influence on admissions decisions, but he said the chair also sent notes on all six students and later met with Schmill to share insight "into who he thought was more of a priority." The filings are the latest salvo in a lawsuit that claims that

17 of the nation's most prestigious colleges colluded to reduce the competition for prospective students and drive down the amount of financial aid they would offer, all while giving special preference to the children of wealthy donors. "That illegal collusion resulted in the defendants providing far less aid to students than would have been provided in a free market," said Robert Gilbert, an attorney for the plaintiffs. Since the lawsuit was filed, 10 of the schools

have reached settlements to pay out a total of \$284 million, including payments of up to \$2,000 to current or former students whose financial aid might have been shortchanged over a period of more than two decades. They are Brown, the University of Chicago, Columbia, Dartmouth, Duke, Emory, Northwestern, Rice, Vanderbilt and Yale. Johns Hopkins is working on a settlement and the six schools still fighting the lawsuit are the California

Institute of Technology, Cornell, Georgetown, MIT, Notre Dame and the University of Pennsylvania. MIT called the lawsuit and the claims about admissions favoritism baseless. "MIT has no history of wealth favoritism in its admissions; quite the opposite," university spokesperson Kimberly Allen said. "After years of discovery in which millions of documents were produced that provide an overwhelming record of independence in our admissions process, plaintiffs could cite just a single instance in which the recommendation of a board member helped sway the decisions for two undergraduate applicants." In a statement, Penn also said the case is meritless that the evidence shows that it doesn't favor students whose families have donated or pledged money to the Ivy League school. "Plaintiffs' whole case is an attempt to embarrass the University about its purported admission practices on issues totally unrelated to this case," the school said. Notre Dame officials also called the case baseless. "We are confident that every student admitted to Notre Dame is fully qualified and ready to succeed," a university spokesperson said in a statement. □

House passes bill backed by Paris Hilton to reform youth treatment facilities

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House passed legislation Wednesday requiring more oversight of youth residential treatment facilities, a feat for hotel heiress Paris Hilton who has spent years lobbying lawmakers to regulate an industry marred by child abuse allegations. The Stop Institutional Child Abuse Act gained overwhelming bipartisan support in the House after passing the Senate unanimously last week. It will now go to President Joe Biden's desk to be signed into law. "This moment is proof that our voices matter, that speaking out can spark

change, and that no child should ever endure the horrors of abuse in silence," Hilton said in an social media post following the vote. "I did this for the younger version of myself and the youth who were senselessly taken from us by the Troubled Teen industry." Hilton has spent the last several years testifying about the abuse she says she suffered years ago at a boarding school in Utah. She was sent to Provo Canyon School for 11 months at age 17 where she says she was abused mentally and physically, recalling that staff members would beat her, force her to take

unknown pills, watch her shower and send her to solitary confinement with-

out clothes as punishment. The 43-year-old said the treatment was so "trauma-

tizing" that she has suffered nightmares and insomnia for years. Details of the abuse were also chronicled in a documentary she released, titled "This is Paris" that was released in September 2020. The legislation passed this week would establish an interagency work group under Department of Health & Human Services that would bring greater transparency around treatment of youth in these programs, particularly when staff use restraints and seclusion rooms as forms of punishment. □



Paris Hilton meets with a supporters after speaking at a Stop Institutional Child Abuse, May 11, 2022 in Washington.

Associated Press

New charges target ex-Miami congressman for lobbying on behalf of sanctioned Venezuelan tycoon

By JOSHUA GOODMAN

MIAMI (AP) — A federal grand jury in Washington has returned an indictment against former Congressman David Rivera for failing to register as a foreign agent of a sanctioned Venezuelan media tycoon on whose behalf the Miami Republican allegedly lobbied the Trump administration.

The indictment is the second set of criminal charges to examine Rivera's relationship with Raúl Gorrín, a billionaire businessman charged in 2018 and again in 2024 with bribing senior Venezuelan officials in corrupt deals to embezzle state funds from Nicolas Maduro's administration.

The indictment unsealed on Wednesday alleges that Rivera, between June 2019 and April 2020, lobbied U.S. officials, including an unnamed senior official in the executive branch, to remove sanctions against Gorrín.

Rivera was allegedly aided in that effort by another unnamed former U.S. official and resident of New York, who he allegedly paid \$125,000 from the over \$5.5 million he received from



Former U.S. Rep. David Rivera speaks with media outside Miami federal court, in Miami, Dec. 20, 2022.

Associated Press

Gorrín or on his behalf, prosecutors from the U.S. Justice Department's National Security Division said. Rivera was charged with money laundering and failing to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, as required when lobbying U.S. officials on behalf of foreign individuals and companies.

To promote his criminal

activities, Rivera allegedly created fake shell companies registered in Delaware using names associated with a law firm and with the unnamed official, as well as the official's hometown, to give the false appearance that the shell companies were legitimate, according to the indictment. Prosecutors said the official was unaware the companies

were using his or her name and hometown.

Ed Shohat, a Miami defense attorney who represents Rivera, declined to comment, saying he hadn't had time to discuss the indictment with his client.

Rivera was arrested in 2022 in another illegal lobbying case, out of federal court in Miami, tied to a \$50 mil-

lion consulting contract his firm, Interamerican Consulting, signed with a U.S. affiliate of Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA. Prosecutors say the 2017 contract was a ruse to hide a secret campaign by Maduro's government to curry favor with the incoming Trump administration.

The Maduro outreach, at the same time Trump's current incoming chief of staff Susie Wiles was working as a lobbyist for Gorrín's TV network Globovision, ultimately failed. In 2019, Trump recognized opposition lawmaker Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate leader and imposed stiff oil sanctions on the OPEC nation in a bid to unseat Maduro.

But before the charm offensive unraveled, Gorrín, with the help of Rivera and others, managed to get his photo taken shaking hands with then-Vice President Mike Pence at an event in Florida. Rivera and Gorrín also met with Trump's pick to become Secretary of State, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, who was once Rivera's roommate when both were state lawmakers in Tallahassee. □

Manhattan man pleads guilty to helping establish secret Chinese police station in NYC

By PHILIP MARCELO

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A Manhattan resident has pleaded guilty to helping establish a secret police station in New York City on behalf of the Chinese govern-

ment.

Chen Jinping, 60, entered the guilty plea on a single count of conspiracy to act as an agent of a foreign government in Brooklyn federal court on Wednesday. Matthew Olsen, an

assistant attorney general in the U.S. Department of Justice, said Chen admitted in court to his role in "audaciously establishing an undeclared police station" in Manhattan and attempting to conceal the effort when approached by the FBI.

"This illegal police station was not opened in the interest of public safety, but to further the nefarious and repressive aims of the PRC in direct violation of American sovereignty," he said in statement, referring to the People's Republic of China.

Prosecutors say Chen and his co-defendant, Lu Jianwang, opened and operated a local branch of

China's Ministry of Public Security in Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood starting in early 2022.

The office, which occupied an entire floor of the building, performed basic services, such as helping Chinese citizens renew their Chinese driver's licenses, but also identified pro-democracy activists living in the U.S., according to federal authorities. The clandestine Chinese police operation was shuttered in the fall of 2022 amid an FBI investigation. But in an apparent effort to obstruct the federal probe, Chen and Lu deleted from their phones communications with a Chinese government official they reported

to, prosecutors said.

China is believed to be operating such secretive police outposts in North America, Europe and other places where there are Chinese communities. The country, however, has denied that they are police stations, saying that they exist mainly to provide citizen services such as renewing driver's licenses.

The arrest of Chen and Lu in April 2023 was part of a series of Justice Department prosecutions aimed at cracking down on "transnational repression," in which foreign governments such as China work to identify, intimidate and silence dissidents in the U.S. □



A six story glass facade building, center, alleged to be the site of a foreign police outpost for China in New York's Chinatown, Monday, April 17, 2023.

Associated Press

France's highest court upholds corruption conviction of former President Nicolas Sarkozy

By SYLVIE CORBET
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's highest court has upheld an appeal court decision which had found former President Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption and influence peddling while he was the country's head of state.

Sarkozy, 69, faces a year in prison, but is expected to ask to be detained at home with an electronic bracelet as is the case for any sentence of two years or less.

He was found guilty of corruption and influence peddling by both a Paris court in 2021 and an appeals court in 2023 for trying to bribe a magistrate in exchange for information about a legal case in which he was implicated.

"The convictions and sentences are therefore final," a Court of Cassation statement on Wednesday said. Sarkozy, who was France's president from 2007 to 2012, retired from public life in 2017 though still plays an influential role in French conservative politics. He was among the guests who attended the reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral earlier this month.

Sarkozy, in a statement



Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy arrives at the courtroom for his appeal trial of trying to bribe a magistrate in exchange for information about a legal case in which he was implicated Monday, Dec. 5, 2022 in Paris.

posted on X, said "I will assume my responsibilities and face all the consequences."

He added: "I have no intention of complaining. But I am not prepared to accept the profound injustice done to me."

Sarkozy said he will seek to bring the case to the European Court of Human Rights, and hopes those proceedings will re-

sult in "France being condemned."

He reiterated his "full innocence."

"My determination is total in this case as in all others," he concluded.

Sarkozy's lawyer, Patrice Spinosi, said his client "will comply" with the ruling. This means the former president will have to wear an electronic bracelet, Spinosi said.

It is the first time in France's modern history that a former president has been convicted and sentenced to a prison term for actions during his term.

Sarkozy's predecessor, Jacques Chirac, was found guilty in 2011 of misuse of public money during his time as Paris mayor and was given a two-year suspended prison sentence. Sarkozy has been involved

in several other legal cases. He has denied any wrongdoing.

He faces another trial next month in Paris over accusations he took millions of dollars from then-Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi to illegally finance his successful 2007 campaign.

The corruption case that led to Wednesday's ruling focused on phone conversations that took place in February 2014.

At the time, investigative judges had launched an inquiry into the financing of Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign. During the inquiry, they discovered that Sarkozy and his lawyer, Thierry Herzog, were communicating via secret mobile phones registered to the alias "Paul Bismuth."

Wiretapped conversations on those phones led prosecutors to suspect Sarkozy and Herzog of promising magistrate Gilbert Azibert a job in Monaco in exchange for leaking information about another legal case involving Sarkozy.

Azibert never got the post and legal proceedings against Sarkozy have been dropped in the case he was seeking information about. □

Associated Press

Mauritius wants to rethink a deal with the UK over remote islands housing a key U.S. base

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government said Wednesday it still plans to hand over a contested Indian Ocean archipelago, which is home to a strategically important military base, to Mauritius, after that country's new leader backed away from the contentious deal.

The U.K. and Mauritius announced an agreement in October to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands, a chain of more than 60 islands just south of the equator off the tip of India. Under the deal, the U.K.-U.S. naval and bomber base on the largest of the islands, Diego Garcia, would remain under U.K. control for at least 99 years.

When it made the announcement, Britain's Labour Party government said it was finalizing details of a treaty with the Mauritian government. Since then, voters in Mauritius ousted the government that made the deal, replacing it with one led

by Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam.

Ramgoolam said he was reopening negotiations because the draft deal "would not produce the benefits that the nation could expect from such an agreement." He told lawmakers in Mauritius' parliament on Tuesday that his government "is still willing to conclude an agreement with the United Kingdom" and had submitted counterproposals.

Britain's Foreign Office Minister Stephen Doughty said he was confident the deal would be finalized, and it was "completely understandable that the new Mauritian government will want time to study the details."

"I am confident that we have agreed a good and fair deal that is in both sides' interests," he told lawmakers in the House of Commons. "It protects the base at proportionate cost. It has been supported across the national security architecture in the United States and by India." □



The Prime Minister of Mauritius, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, addresses the United Nations General Assembly at the U.N. headquarters in New York, Monday, Sept. 19, 2005.

Associated Press

A new neutrino detector in China aims to spot mysterious ghost particles lurking around us

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN
and NG HAN GUAN
Associated Press

KAIPING, China (AP) — Underneath a granite hill in southern China, a massive detector is nearly complete that will sniff out the mysterious ghost particles lurking around us.

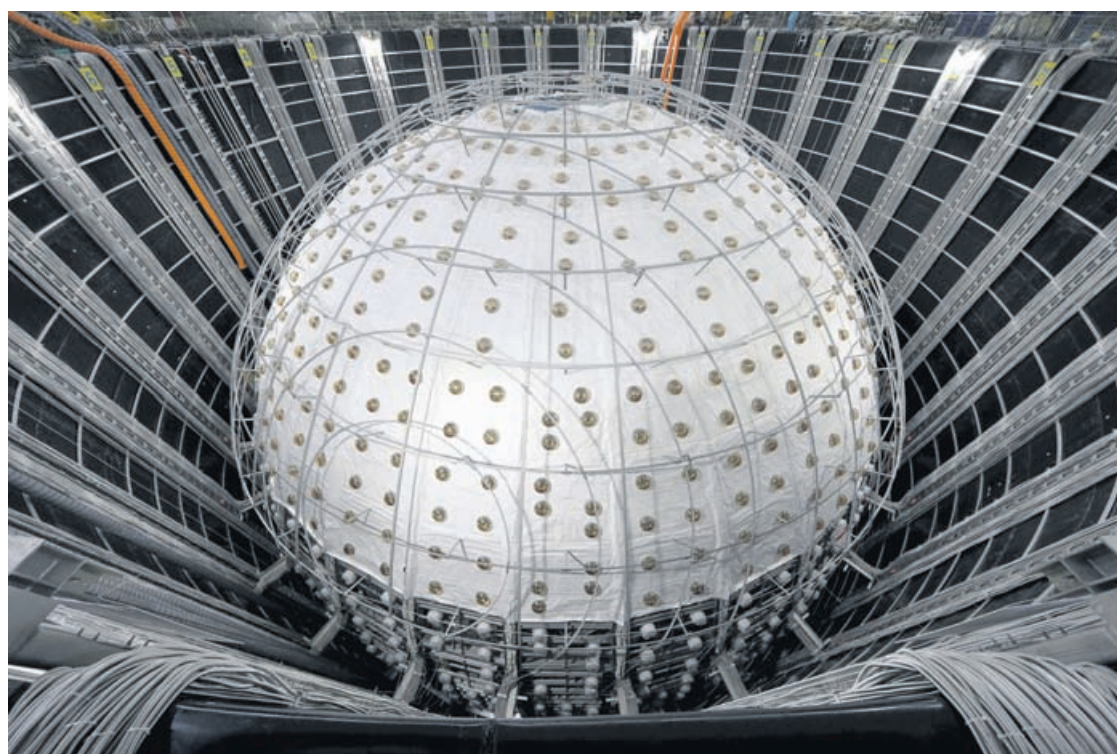
The Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory will soon begin the difficult task of spotting neutrinos: tiny cosmic particles with a mind-bogglingly small mass.

The detector is one of three being built across the globe to study these elusive ghost particles in the finest detail yet. The other two, based in the United States and Japan, are still under construction.

Spying neutrinos is no small feat in the quest to understand how the universe came to be. The Chinese effort, set to go online next year, will push the technology to new limits, said Andre de Gouvea, a theoretical physicist at Northwestern University who is not involved with the project. "If they can pull that off," he said, "it would be amazing."

What are neutrinos?

Neutrinos date back to the Big Bang, and trillions



The \$300 million detector is seen at the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory located 2297 feet (700 meters) underground in Kaiping in southern China's Guangdong province on Friday, Oct. 11, 2024.

zoom through our bodies every second. They spew from stars like the sun and stream out when atomic bits collide in a particle accelerator.

Scientists have known about the existence of neutrinos for almost a century, but they're still in the early stages of figuring out what the particles really are.

"It's the least understood particle in our world," said Cao Jun, who helps man-

age the detector known as JUNO. "That's why we need to study it."

There's no way to spot the tiny neutrinos whizzing around on their own. Instead, scientists measure what happens when they collide with other bits of matter, producing flashes of light or charged particles.

Neutrinos bump into other particles only very rarely, so to up their chances of

catching a collision, physicists have to think big.

"The solution for how we measure these neutrinos is to build very, very big detectors," de Gouvea said. A big detector to measure tiny particles

The \$300 million detector in Kaiping, China, took over nine years to build. Its location 2,297 feet (700 meters) underground protects from pesky cosmic rays and radiation that could throw off

its neutrino-sniffing abilities. On Wednesday, workers began the final step in construction. Eventually, they'll fill the orb-shaped detector with a liquid designed to emit light when neutrinos pass through and submerge the whole thing in purified water.

It'll study antineutrinos — an opposite to neutrinos which allow scientists to understand their behavior produced from collisions inside two nuclear power plants located over 31 miles (50 kilometers) away. When the antineutrinos come into contact with particles inside the detector, they'll produce a flash of light.

The detector is specially designed to answer a key question about a long-standing mystery. Neutrinos switch between three flavors as they zip through space, and scientists want to rank them from lightest to heaviest.

Sensing these subtle shifts in the already evasive particles will be a challenge, said Kate Scholberg, a physicist at Duke University who is not involved with the project.

"It's actually a very daring thing to even go after it," she said. □

Associated Press

World's oldest Sunday newspaper, the UK's Observer, sold in face of journalistic opposition



A view of the offices of the Guardian and its sister paper, The Observer, on Monday night, Aug. 19, 2013.

Associated Press

By PAN PYLAS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The owner of Britain's Guardian newspaper confirmed Wednesday that it has sold The Observer, the world's oldest Sunday newspaper, to Tortoise Media for an undisclosed fee.

The Scott Trust, which owns the Guardian Media Group, said in a statement that Tortoise Media is purchasing The Observer through a combination of cash and shares. The Observer, which was founded in 1791 and became part of the Guardian Media Group in 1993, is a bastion of liberal values in Britain's media landscape. Tortoise has promised readers that it will honor the paper's historic values.

Tortoise was launched in 2019 by James Harding, a former editor of the London Times and director of news at the BBC, and the former U.S. ambassador to Lon-

don, Matthew Barzun.

"The Observer has a historic place in the world of journalism and a special place in the heart of its readers," said Harding. "We're excited to put all we have into making sure its values, interests and passions reach even more people in the many years to come."

As part of the deal, Tortoise has agreed a five-year commercial agreement with GMG, which will see it pay for both print and distribution services, as well as marketing through the Guardian.

The Scott Trust will also take a 9% stake in Tortoise Media and commit 5 million pounds (\$6.3 million) into Tortoise Media as part of the 25 million-pound investment, much of which will be focused on establishing The Observer's own digital identity currently its online presence is very much secondary to that of the Guardian's. □

Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

ORANJESTAD - Aruba's City Center Street Car - or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" - is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with



a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies.

Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally

air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9

stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center- it is free for all! □

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

(Oranjestad)—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses than topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

When the fruit is unripe and green, this can be used to stimulate menstruation flow in women.



This also stimulates the passing kidney stones. When ripe, the fruit can be used for poisoning in the gut and can help treat rheumatic diseases, like arthritis.

However, breastfeeding women who cannot produce much milk are advised not to consume too pineapple, and people with acid reflux are recommended to not consume any pineapple at all.

Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to tropical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a "shalup" (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk,



add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.

Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world and can be grown all year round on the island. Related to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help purify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.

Eggplant kataplan* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis.

*warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a simple syrup.

*kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen.



Papillon: Where Culinary Tradition Sparks with Timeless Elegance



Tucked away in the vibrant heart of the Village for over a decade and a half, Papillon isn't just a restaurant; it's a culinary adventure waiting to unfold. Picture this: a sanctuary where the flavors of the French Caribbean have danced harmoniously with classic French fare for the past 15 years, all set against the backdrop of a movie-inspired ambiance that's as enchanting as it is welcoming.

Located in the heart of Palm Beach and within walking distance from hotels and local markets in the area, Papillon takes the famous story of a French man experiencing the flavors and culture of the Caribbean and incorporates these aspects of the Caribbean touch

into their French culinary repertoire. Step through the doors of the newly-expanded Papillon, and you're not just stepping into a dining establishment; you're stepping into a world where sophistication embraces you like an old friend. The decor, a homage to the allure of the iconic film, casts a spell of intimacy and comfort, urging you to settle in and relish every moment. Here, dining isn't just about sustenance; it's about indulging in an experience meticulously crafted to ignite your senses.

At the heart of Papillon's magic lies its menu – a symphony of flavors orchestrated by culinary artisans. Imagine savoring the decadent richness of foie gras or the sublime

delicacy of frog legs, each dish a love letter to tradition infused with a dash of innovation. And oh, the spectacle of the Dover sole being expertly prepared tableside! It's culinary theater at its finest, leaving you spellbound with every bite. All this served with a backdrop of the Caribbean ambience, complete with live musical performances and an inviting and colorful twist to your dinner experience!

But wait, there's more! Enter the realm of the Chef's Table, a weekly extravaganza led by the maestro himself, Executive Chef Juan Ludeña. Prepare to be whisked away on a six-course odyssey, each dish meticulously paired with wines handpicked from the largest French wine selection on the island by the esteemed Maitre d' Michael Otten. It's a soirée reserved for those who truly appreciate the artistry of gastronomy – an exquisite symphony for the palate.

In essence, Papillon isn't just a restaurant; it's an oasis for epicurean explorers. It's where passion meets refinement, where every dish is a masterpiece waiting to be savored, and every moment is a celebration of the finer things in life. So if you're craving the warmth of



French Caribbean delights, Papillon invites you to join them on an unforgettable journey for the senses. Bon appétit!

Papillon is located in Palm Beach in front of the Hilton Resort, and open from 5pm to 10pm. Early Bird takes places from 5pm to 7pm. For reservations or more information please contact the restaurant at +297 699 5400, e-mail them at info@papillonaruba.com or visit their website at papillonaruba.com □



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to:

Aruba to me

news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you

a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Maria and Joe Nullet from Long Island, New York, USA.

They wrote to us saying: "For over 30 years, Aruba has been our escape—a slice of paradise that feels like a second home. Its stunning, turquoise beaches are unlike any other, offering serenity and beauty that's hard to match.

The island boasts top-notch restaurants and some of the most welcoming, beautiful

people I've ever encountered. It's a place where I feel safe and at peace.

Eagle Beach, in particular, has my heart. Known as one of the best beaches in the Caribbean, it's where I've created countless cherished memories, surrounded by its powdery white sand and gentle waves.

Aruba is more than a destination—it's our haven."

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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Meet Aruba's biggest hero Boy Ecury

(Oranjestad)—This past May 4th, Aruba as well as The Netherlands commemorated those who sadly perished during the Second World War. As is known around the globe, this chapter in world history is one of the most tragic yet, and many soldiers and rebels have died on the frontline during this time.

One of those rebels who have fought against the Nazi regime, was an Aruban named Segundo Jorge Adelberto "Boy" Ecury. Born in Aruba on April 23rd, 1922, Boy spent his childhood on the island, before being sent to The Netherlands by his father when he was 15 years old to continue his studies abroad. This was in 1937, three years before WWII broke out.

During the war, he actively participated in the rebellion in The Netherlands against the Nazi regime, but his rebellious streak and constant drive to fight for justice began even before the war broke out. Being a person of color with a Haitian heritage living in The Netherlands made him vulnerable to discrimination, and this inspired him to be an activist, to stand up and fight against discrimination and oppression.

After seeing the horrific bombings of Rotterdam firsthand, he decided to join the resistance. At the same time, he was still studying and living with family in Tilburg. It was there where he met people

who printed and distributed the rebellion newspaper. This would be the first of three rebellion group that he would join throughout his 4-year service to the resistance.

Boy's primary task as member of the group was to distract the German soldiers while others ran into hiding into alleyways. This he was able to do because of his skin color and confronting demeanor. Boy also participated in the multiple sabotaging operations against the German military occupying The Netherlands. These included bombings on German military trucks and trains. The group also helped people go into hiding, as well as opened fire against allies of the Nazi regime. In these operations, Boy really stood out for his cold bloodedness.

In 1943, he received a notice to be placed for work in Germany. This he refused, of course, and went into hiding using multiple addresses in multiple cities. Because he was a wanted man, he of course could not continue to be active as a rebel. However, stubborn and naturally rebellious as he was, he always tried to join in on the operations regardless.

In 1944, after his friend Luis de Lannoy, a fellow rebel from Curacao, was arrested and executed, he moved to Delft, where he joined his third and last group in Rotterdam. During this time, he wrote a goodbye letter for his family, possibly knowing

the risks of him being active again in the big cities. Eventually, he proved himself right. On November 5th, 1944, Boy Ecury was arrested by German soldiers. He was placed in the "Oranjarahotel" prison in Scheveningen, The Hague, where he was questioned. Despite being given away by an acquaintance, he himself never gave away the names of his comrades. Famously, he told his cell mate: "I will die with a smile on my face."

On November 6th, 1944, Ecury was executed. He was only 22 years old.

Ecury was buried with military honor. In 1949, the Aruban Government erected a monumental bust of him in front of what is now the linear park trail, and in 1984 he received the Resistance Memorial Cross postmortem.

Boy's life motto was this: "In my father's house, there is no place for a traitor."



Source: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.

Tara Lounge & Elements Restaurant Embark on Exciting Renovations!

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Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba



ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

Iguanas

Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that international trade is regulated through the CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its

little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing. The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4-5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega *Phyllodactylus Julieni* is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

Blue Kododo

These are one of the most strik-



ing lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus arubensis*, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Kododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Striped anole

The striped anole (*Anolis lineatus*) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in

dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay.

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.



Aruba Birdlife Conservation

The district of Savaneta

The capital before Oranjestad

(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba—and Savaneta—around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However,

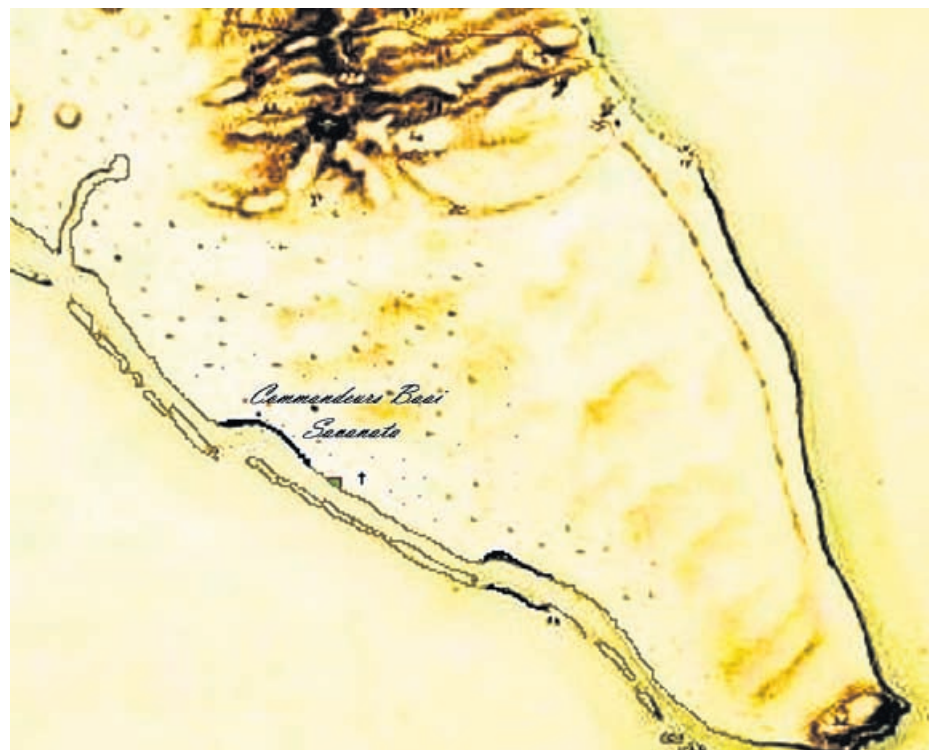
Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born. Bonaire and Curaçao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business



Commandeursbaai (Commander's Bay) at Savaneta

men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

Because of its land surface, Sava-

neta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □

Source: *Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta)* by Adolf "Dufi" Kock.



Alonso de Ojeda



"Quebracho" (Kibrahacha) tree; used to make dye and paint

CROSSWORD

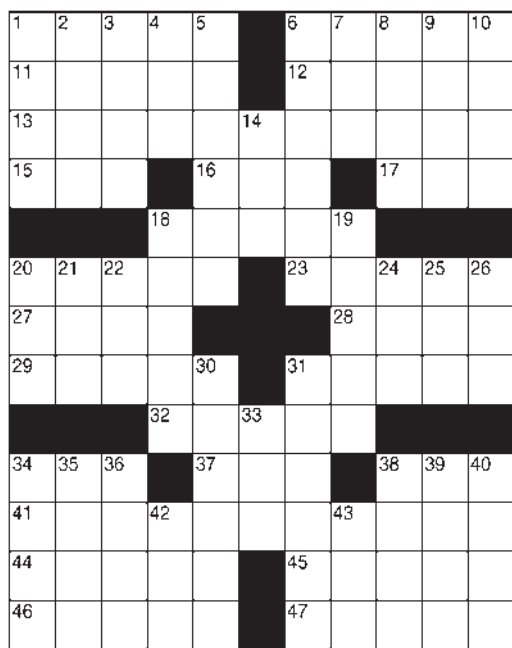
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 TV, radio, etc.
6 Get smart
11 Glorify
12 Dome-shaped home
13 Leaving in large numbers
15 Sinking signal
16 Museum focus
17 Summer, in Paris
18 Crooked
20 Grownup
23 Takes it easy
27 Prudent
28 Database option
29 Apply, as force
31 Account
32 Follow the outline of
34 Boar's mate
37 Flamenco cheer
38 Greek X
41 Kicking back
44 Brat's opposite
45 Cash drawers
46 Face features
47 Like conga lines

DOWN

- 1 Base meal
2 Trade fair
3 Speaker's platform
4 Suffering
5 Finally
6 Beam above a door
7 Nest item
8 Lotion additive
9 Decisive defeat
10 Jot down
14 Tick off
18 Wide awake
19 Squander
20 Really impress
21 Twice cinq
22 Take advantage of
24 Menagerie
25 Drop the ball
26 Messy room
30 Fantasy characters
31 Perfumes
33 Boxing great
34 Checkout act
35 "Dear me!"
36 Costume parts
38 Soda choice
39 Unwieldy ship
40 Tiny
42 Writer Harper
43 Collins base



12-19

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-19

CRYPTOQUOTE

RTVGGVE JG FYV GVHGSQ
NYJBY VQDHDVG FYV NYSTV
NSKTE JQ H BSQG XJKHBO
SC TSLV. — YHIJTFSQ
NKJDYF IHRJV

Cryptoquote: YOU CAN GET
EXCITED ABOUT THE FUTURE. THE PAST
WON'T MIND — HILARY DEPIANO

Cruise ship Schedule: December 16 - 22 2024

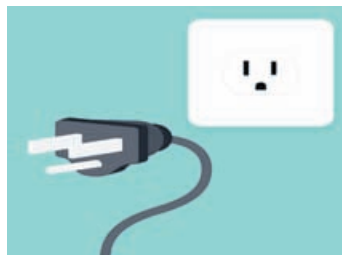
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	16	ENCHANTED PRINCESS	08.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	17	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I	1
WED	18	NORWEGIAN JEWEL	14.30	21.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
FRI	20	CARNIVAL MIRACLE	09.00	22.00	C	1
SAT	21	STAR CLIPPER	09.00	18.00	I	1
		EXPLORER OF THE SEAS	16.30	****	C	1
		STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	B	1
SUN	22	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - dept.	****	18.00	C	-
		FREEWINDS - DEPT.	****	22.15	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though,

most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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3308
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elevator ocean view
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Divi Village

Eagle beach
Studio week #1 room # 8201
Contract expire : 2043
Building D
Price :\$8000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Divi Village

Eagle beach
Studio wk # 5 room # 8105
Building D 1 st floor
Contract expire : 01/22/2037
Price :\$8000
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Divi village Golf

Eagle beach
One bedroom week # 9
Room # 2118 birdie 3
23 weeks remaining
Price :\$9000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Aruba Divi Phoenix

Palm beach
One bedroom week 52 room
953 One bedroom week 01
room # 654
Contract expire : 2053
Price :\$60,000 both weeks
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Aruba Divi Phoenix

Palm beach
Two bedroom week 01 room
#672
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2047
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2025
Price : \$2000
Call : 011-297-630-1307
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

For Rent

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Eagle beach
One bedroom sleep 4
Date : 19 December to 26 De-
cember 2024
Price : 011-297-630-1307
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

For rent

Renaissance ocean suites
Private islands
One bedroom sleep 4
Date : 3 to 17 January 2025
Price :\$2000 each week
Call :011-297-630-1307
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

For Rent

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Eagle Beach
One Bedroom sleep 4
Date :8 February to 15 February
2025
Price :\$2000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

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Room # 2136
Ground floor garden / ocean
view
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Renaissance ocean suites

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Room # 2522
5th floor garden view
Price :\$11000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Renaissance ocean suites

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Room # 2325
Pool /ocean view
Price :\$11,000
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For rent

Barcelo resort
3 BR 3 Bath sleep 12
Date : 8 February to 22 Febru-
ary 2025
All inclusive
Price :\$5000 each week
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Johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Divi village golf

Eagle beach
One bedroom week 50 room
#2258 Birdie 10
24 weeks remaining on the
contract Price :\$ 8000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Divi Village golf

Eagle beach
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Room # 2258 Birdie 10
24 weeks remaining on the
contract Price : \$ 12,000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

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Eagle Beach
One Bedroom Week # 3
Room # 2318 \$ 9000
Studio WK # 3
room # 2317 \$8000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Divi Village Golf

Eagle Beach
Studio WK # 4 room # 2129
Contract expire :12/31/2045
Price :\$8000
Call : 011-297-630-1307
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Divi Village Golf

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Studio week 5,6,7,8,9
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contract
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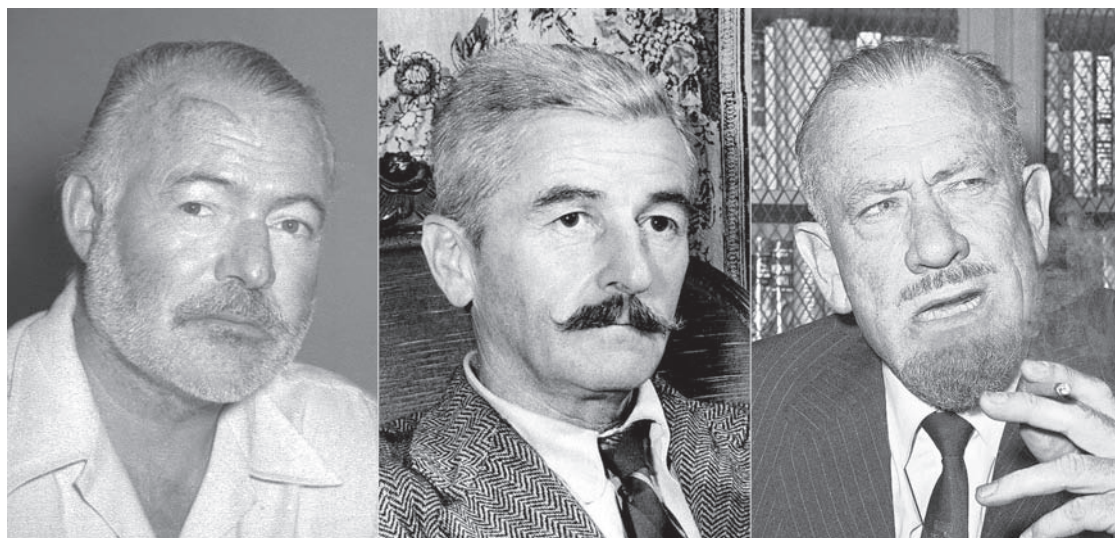
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Popeye and Tintin enter the public domain in 2025 along with novels from Faulkner and Hemingway



This combination of photos show authors Ernest Hemingway in 1950, left, William Faulkner in 1950, center, and John Steinbeck in 1962.

Associated Press

By **ANDREW DALTON**

AP Entertainment Writer

Popeye can punch without permission and Tintin can roam freely starting in 2025. The two classic comic characters who first appeared in 1929 are among the intellectual properties

becoming public domain in the United States on Jan. 1. That means they can be used and repurposed without permission or payment to copyright holders.

This year's crop of newly public artistic creations lacks the landmark vibes of last year's entrance of Mickey Mouse into the public domain. But they include a deep well of canonical works whose 95-year copyright maximums will expire. And the Disney icon's public domain presence expands.

"It's a trove! There are a dozen new Mickey cartoons he speaks for the first time and dons the familiar white gloves," said Jennifer Jenkins, director of Duke's Center for the

Study of the Public Domain. "There are masterpieces from Faulkner and Hemingway, the first sound films from Alfred Hitchcock, Cecil B. DeMille, and John Ford, and amazing music from Fats Waller, Cole Porter, and George Gershwin. Pretty exciting!" Here's a closer look at this year's crop.

Comics characters loom large Popeye the Sailor, with his bulging forearms, mealy-mouthed speech, and propensity for fist-fights, was created by E.C. Segar and made his first appearance in the newspaper strip "Thimble Theater" in 1929, speaking his first words, "'Ja think I'm a cowboy?" when asked if he was a sailor. □



Editor

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Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com
W: www.arubatoday.com
@arubatoday



Tom Cruise poses with the Navy Distinguished Public Service Award received from The United States Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro, at the Longcross South Studios, in Runnymede, Surrey, England, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024.

Associated Press

Tom Cruise gets a top U.S. Navy honor for boosting the military with his screen roles

LONDON (AP) — The world's most famous fictional Top Gun is now a decorated naval hero.

Tom Cruise was awarded the U.S. Navy's top civilian honor on Tuesday for "outstanding contributions to the Navy and the Marine Corps" with "Top Gun" and other films.

Cruise, who has been working in the U.K., was given the Distinguished Public Service Award by U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro in a ceremony at Longcross Studios near London.

The 62-year-old actor said he was proud to receive the "extraordinary acknowledgement," which came with a medal and a certificate.

"I admire all of the servicemen and women," Cruise said. "I know in life, something that is very true to me, is that is to lead is to serve. And I know that to my core. And I see that in the servicemen and women."

The navy said Cruise had "increased public awareness and appreciation for our highly trained personnel and the sacrifices they make while in uniform."

"Top Gun," the smash hit 1986 movie about Cold War flying aces, made Cruise a star and drove a spike in military enlistment. The Navy even set up recruitment tables in theaters.

Interest was renewed with the 2022 sequel "Top Gun: Maverick," in which Cruise's character mentored a new generation of elite aviators.

The navy said the sequel "brought nostalgia to older audiences and reinvigorated the minds of newer audience members, which effectively targeted a younger audience's interest into the skill sets and opportunities the Navy can provide."

Cruise was also commended for his roles in "Born on the Fourth of July," "A Few Good Men" and the "Mission: Impossible" movies.

Cruise's next on-screen adventure, "Mission: Impossible: The Final Reckoning," is due for release in May 2025. □

23XI Racing and Front Row can compete in NASCAR's 2025 season as chartered teams in legal victory

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—The two teams suing NASCAR over an antitrust complaint were granted a preliminary injunction Wednesday that will allow them to compete as chartered teams in 2025. U.S. District Court Judge Kenneth D. Bell said in his ruling, which favors 23XI Racing and Front Row Motorsports, that "NASCAR fans (and members of the public who may become fans) have an interest in watching all the teams compete with their best drivers and most competitive teams."

NASCAR did not immediately respond to a request for comment and has not said if it plans to appeal.

23XI, the team owned by NBA Hall of Famer Michael Jordan and three-time Daytona 500 winner Denny Hamlin, and Front Row refused in September to sign take-it-or-leave-it revenue sharing offers made by NASCAR just 48 hours before the start of the play-offs.

A charter is essentially a franchise and guarantees prize money, a spot in the field each week and other protections.

The teams filed an antitrust suit alleging NASCAR owners are "monopolistic bullies" and were denied in federal court in November



Car owner Michael Jordan watches from the pits during a NASCAR Cup Series auto race at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Homestead, Fla., Oct. 27, 2024.

Associated Press

a request to be recognized as "chartered" teams as the suit continues.

23XI and Front Row can now sign the charter agreements and still pursue their lawsuit.

They also each were granted permission to purchase additional charters from Stewart Haas Racing, which closed its four-team shop at the end of the 2024 season, and NASCAR must approve the transfers to those teams.

"YESSSSSS!!!!!!!" Hamlin wrote on social media.

It was a much-needed win for 23XI. Tyler Reddick, who finished fourth in the 2024 Cup standings, had an opt-out clause in his contract that would have gone into effect Wednesday and made him a free agent if the team did not land a charter for next season. Fellow 23XI driver Bubba Wallace also informed his team he needed to know how it intended to compete "immediately" so he could explore options with other teams, the judge wrote.

Jordan had said he took

the fight to court on behalf of all teams competing in the top motorsports series in the United States. NASCAR had argued that the two teams simply do not like the terms of the final charter agreement and asked for the lawsuit be dismissed. Both Front Row and 23XI want to expand from two full-time cars to three. They have agreements with SHR to purchase one charter each. SHR is now Haas Factory and has plans to use one charter in 2025.

Until Wednesday's injunc-

tion, 23XI and Front Row would have been forced to compete next season as "open" teams that don't have the same protections or financial gains that come from holding a charter.

The teams contend they must be chartered under some of their contractual agreements with current sponsors and drivers, and competing next year as open teams will cause significant losses.

Earlier this month, the suit was transferred to a different judge than the one who heard the first round of arguments and ruled against the two teams in their request for a temporary injunction to be recognized in 2025 as chartered teams as the case proceeds.

"Here, the public interest strongly favors entry of a limited preliminary injunction in favor of the Plaintiffs during the 2025 NASCAR race season, both to give fans of stock car racing the opportunity to watch (and root for and against) the full slate of teams and to allow Plaintiffs' antitrust legal challenges to be considered," Bell wrote.

Front Row is owned by businessman Bob Jenkins, while 23XI is owned by Jordan, Hamlin and longtime Jordan adviser Curtis Polk. □

Michael Vick accepts head coaching job at Norfolk State

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — Michael Vick has agreed to become the head coach at Norfolk State in a return to football for the former NFL star, who has never coached at any level. The 44-year-old Vick announced on his Facebook page on Tuesday night that he has accepted the job. Norfolk State did not immediately confirm the hiring of Vick, who grew up in nearby Newport News.

"Looking forward to coming back home," Vick said in his social media post.

Vick starred in college at Virginia Tech and was a four-time Pro Bowler in 13 seasons for Atlanta, Philadelphia, the New York Jets and Pittsburgh. He helped launch an era of quarterbacks who were threats both running and throwing the ball.

Vick served 18 months in federal prison in the prime of his career after pleading guilty to his role in a dogfighting ring. After his release in 2009, he returned to the NFL and won AP Comeback Player of the Year with the Eagles in 2010, but his best years were behind him.

He retired in 2017 and has advocated against animal cruelty while also working as an NFL analyst for Fox Sports.

Vick's hiring by Norfolk State was first reported Tuesday by the Virginian-Pilot.

Norfolk State fired coach Dawson Odums in November after a 4-8 season. The historically Black school plays in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference. The Spartans have made one appearance in the FCS playoffs, losing in the first round to in-state rival Old Dominion in 2011.

Before accepting the Norfolk State job, Vick also spoke to Sacramento State about its open head coaching position. □



Former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick speaks to members of the media during NFL football training camp at the team's practice facility in Flowery Branch, Ga., Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2022.

Associated Press

Lillard and Antetokounmpo won an NBA Cup together. Now, the next challenge: chasing the big prize

By **TIM REYNOLDS**

AP Basketball Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Damian Lillard and Giannis Antetokounmpo stood side-by-side during the postgame celebration after the NBA Cup final. Antetokounmpo was holding the MVP trophy. Lillard was holding the bigger trophy.

And it was a moment that Lillard had waited a long time to savor.

He's been a rookie of the year, a 3-point contest champion, an All-Star MVP, even a member of the league's 75th anniversary team. And while his biggest goal is still winning an NBA championship, the significance of winning the NBA Cup was not lost on the 13-year veteran.



Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo (34), Milwaukee Bucks guard Damian Lillard (0), and Milwaukee Bucks center Brook Lopez (11) celebrate after their team's victory in the championship game of the NBA Cup basketball tournament against the Oklahoma City Thunder Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

"I've had a lot of experience individually where I've had accomplishments and stuff," Lillard said after the Bucks beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 97-81 on Tuesday night in the Cup final.

"But to have some team success and win something and be the last team standing in this tournament, it feels great."

The Bucks have a championship coach in Doc Rivers, the core of a team that won a title in 2021. Antetokounmpo, Khristian Middleton, Brook Lopez, Bobby Portis and Pat Connaughton among them and one of the game's elite guards in Lillard. Starting 1-6 and 2-8 this year might have raised some eyebrows, but the Bucks insisted that they never doubted themselves.

They've been one of the league's hottest teams since that awful start and rolled through the in-season tournament with a 7-0 record. Winning the NBA Cup might be a reminder perhaps an unnecessary one of the Bucks' potential.

"I think it reminds us that we can beat anybody," Rivers said. "And we don't care if it tells everybody else that. We only care about us. It's what I said on the first day of camp. I also said we can lose to anybody if we don't play right."

Antetokounmpo and Lillard are leading the way, and that can't be a surprise.

Both are playing at their perennial All-Star level. They're the highest-scoring duo in the league, combining to average more than 58 points per game. They were the best two players on the floor in the NBA Cup final, Antetokounmpo getting a triple-double 26 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists

on his way to MVP honors, and Lillard scoring 23. Year 1 of their pairing after Lillard wound up in Milwaukee after 11 years in Portland wasn't perfect. It was good, not great. Year 2 is clearly better. □



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